

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

1. 269 Ra

THE GARDEN CALENDAR

RECEIVED
FEB 28 1936

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Thursday, February 27, 1936.

- - - - -

Hello Folks: In my Farm and Home Hour talk yesterday, I mentioned the importance of having plenty of organic matter in our garden soils. I also referred to an English bulletin on the manuring of vegetable crops and mentioned the way those English gardeners utilized every possible source of organic matter and plant food that they could secure for use on their land.

On most farms where any livestock is kept it is still possible to provide enough composted manure for use on the garden. It often happens in cleaning up the barnlot there is a lot of fine material that can be scraped up and used on the garden. To my mind there is no better use that can be made of this material than to put it on the garden. I say this because there is no similar area of ground on the farm that will give as great returns in actual value as the garden spot. I do not care how profitable the major crops on the farm may be there is always need for a garden from which the farm family can secure its supply of fresh vegetables as needed.

I have often heard the argument that it is cheaper to grow an acre or two of some staple crop and buy the vegetables but it has been my observation that where this method is pursued the family very seldom has an adequate supply of fresh vegetables, even though the markets may be close by.

The second point that I would like to call to your attention is the importance of getting good seeds for planting in your gardens. This is even more important for truck farmers and gardeners who are growing special crops for the market. There is scarcely a day passes that I do not get letters asking me to recommend some seed dealer who can supply a particular strain of some vegetable crop. In years gone by many of our gardeners were content to buy seeds by name only, but at present our up-to-date gardeners are insisting that they not only have seeds that are true to name but that they are furnished a special strain that has been developed for their particular locality and conditions.

In our work with the improvement of varieties of tomatoes, for example, we have found that even after we have gotten a new and promising variety, we have to prove it for the various parts of the country. The same is true of strawberries and in our strawberry hybridization work, Mr. Darrow, who is in charge of this work has found that he must get a trial of a new variety in all of the principal strawberry-producing sections before he can recommend it for the various sections.

(over)

- 5 -

Recently, in hybridization work with lettuce we ran into the same thing and we found that a special strain that was ideal for the Imperial Valley of California might not be best for the muck lands of New York State, and that any variety developed at our field station here at Washington would have to be subjected to tests elsewhere before it could be distributed. I am telling you this just as an indication as to what is involved in the work of establishing new varieties and strains of our fruits and vegetables.

Coming back for a moment to that question of having or not having a good home garden I just want to say that a great deal depends upon the enthusiasm and energy of the gardener, mainly energy. Most of us are very happy while we are eating nice fresh peas, snap beans or roasting ears from our gardens but often forget about how nice it is to have these good things when we should be preparing the soil and planting them. Given a reasonably good piece of land most of us can grow good vegetables and small fruits if we just make up our minds to do it. I get hundreds of letters asking about how to grow this or that crop or plant that is of little value or importance. Of course I get many letters asking for information on how to grow good lima beans and sweet corn and tomatoes, but a lot of folks seem to be chasing the little known and things of minor importance.

Where a family is establishing a garden I usually recommend that they plant a patch of asparagus because asparagus is one of the best of our early spring vegetables. I usually advise planting a patch of strawberries and in the south dewberries and in the north raspberries and blackberries. In the northern sections a few hills of rhubarb should be planted. Among the annual vegetables most of us want plenty of potatoes for home use, snap beans, peas, tomatoes, carrots, beets, spinach, turnips and turnip greens, sweet corn and so on, about 12 or 15 of the standard vegetables. The motto should be plenty for summer use and some to can or store for winter.

Our commercial and market gardeners have been compelled to adjust their production to market conditions and the shipment of the vast quantities of fruits and vegetables from other parts of the country. The problem can usually be solved by reducing the number of crops grown and specializing upon those that will find a ready market. The whole trend is toward the production and marketing of quality products and above all getting them to the customers in a fresh condition.

###